

CASE STUDY

SAVE THE FOOD IN NASHVILLE: GROWING CONSUMER AWARENESS



© MP&F Strategic Communications

In 2015, NRDC selected Nashville as its pilot city for developing high-impact local policies and actions to address food waste by preventing food from being discarded, rescuing surplus food to direct to hungry people, and composting and digesting food scraps. Today, the [Nashville Food Waste Initiative](#), led by Urban Green Lab with support from NRDC and the Environmental Law Institute, engages governments, consumers, businesses, nonprofits, and communities, developing and implementing strategies and tools as models for cities around the country.

In 2016, NRDC partnered with the Ad Council on a national consumer awareness effort called the [Save the Food campaign](#). Save the Food was created to teach consumers, who account for about 40 percent of the food wasted in the United States, that they bear responsibility but also can make a difference by taking action to reduce that waste. The free-to-download Save the Food materials range from posters to social media ads to digital files for larger display screens.

“The campaign’s first goal is to raise awareness about the impact of food waste, and the second is to provide people with tools so they can really make changes in their own homes,” says Andrea Spacht Collins, sustainable food systems specialist at NRDC. “The campaign has a [spectacular website with a lot of digital tools](#) that people can use for free. There also is a series of open-source ads that ad agencies or city officials can use so they don’t have to produce their own materials, and they can use them in various ways and in the places that make the most sense for them.”

“For the Nashville Food Waste Initiative (NFWI), one of our goals was to use the Save the Food ads to help support the various projects and activities the initiative was working on and bring more awareness to food waste around Nashville,” Collins adds.

Out-of-home advertising (on billboards, buses, and other public places) is typically costly both to create and to deliver. But with the help of local businesses, vendors, and city government officials, NFWI was able to secure placement in some of Nashville’s most popular locations, usually at little or no cost.

“There are opportunities out there for low-cost or even free space if you ask about it and think creatively enough,” says Lindsey Ganson, a former account supervisor for MP&F Strategic Communications, who helped place many of the Save the Food materials. “Being a nonprofit is a big factor, especially with advertising companies; showing them that you’re trying to do something educational or for the greater good can go a long way,” she adds. In the case of NFWI, “being able to talk about the larger issue effectively and offer compelling facts made a difference in proving the positive impact these placements would have on the city. It doesn’t hurt to ask.”

Save the Food ads were placed in high-traffic areas, such as the “Nashville Sign,” a huge digital billboard at an intersection in Nashville where 13 lanes of traffic come together. The company that operates the billboard there offers nonprofits free advertising space, and NFWI successfully competed to obtain a spot. Working with local government officials, NFWI was also able to secure advertising space inside city buses. And Bridgestone Arena, where the popular Nashville Predators play professional hockey, agreed to display Save the Food posters on walls and counters by its concession stands.

“The Save the Food assets are really great, professionally designed, free materials that can be displayed almost anywhere—including individual businesses, billboards, universities, and construction sites,” says Linda Breggin, project director for NFWI. “The incredibly valuable tool kit includes videos and also static ads that are particularly easy for sports arenas, convention centers, and other event venues to display on their video monitors.”

“Think creatively about where you might be able to get these materials placed, even if the placements might not be traditional advertising spaces,” Collins says. “Think on your feet, and take opportunities for space as they come up, even if they weren’t in the original planning.”

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

[Save the Food website](#)

[Save the Food Partner Kit](#)

[NRDC Save the Food Blog](#)

[Food Waste: Strategic Communications and Partnership Guide](#)